

Indiana Department of Environmental Management

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(Text does not include verbatim comments)

Hello...so good to be here today. I appreciate your kind invitation to join you today. I would also like to extend my best regards to you folks here today who work in those places where the rubber really does meet the road; albeit the rubber is likely retreads. You are on the front lines of making Indiana a safer, cleaner place to live, as we say at IDEM.

Every day when you go to work you deal with those issues that affect Hoosiers where they live, work and play. You reach out and touch the lives of the people you serve. My hat is off to the hard work that you do.

Sometimes in Indianapolis, up on the thirteenth floor of the government center, we can get so involved in our meetings and reports that we can lose touch with the everyday issues. We work hard not to let that happen but it is not always easy. That is why I like to meet with groups like yours: to be reminded what we are all working toward.

As I prepared my remarks for today I thought of Janus, the Roman god for whom the month of January is named. Janus had two faces...one looked back and one looked ahead. Thus, he was chosen to symbolize the month of January.

Today I would like to take on the persona of Janus and both look back and ahead. Knowing where we have been and what we have been doing is valuable. Planning and working on tomorrow, next week, next month and next year is essential.

So let's begin by taking a look back at some of the places we have recently been. Daniel Webster said: "The past, at least, is secure." We cannot change or alter where we have been and what we have done. Our accomplishments and shortcomings are forever written and unchangeable.

Shakespeare, however, took a different view toward the past when he wrote: "What's past is prologue." So with Shakespeare's understanding that we can learn from the past and that the past is the basis for what we build and do in the future, let's look at some highlights.

In the area of solid waste, since 1991, Indiana has seen a reduction from seventy-two municipal landfills to a current total of 31. Four hundred (400) dumps in Indiana have been closed.

As you all know, in 1990 Indiana established voluntary goals to reduce waste disposal fifty percent by January 2001. Between 1993 and 1998 the source reduction and recycling rate for municipal solid waste increased fifteen percentage points from nineteen to thirty-four percent.

In the last two years, between July 1997 and June of this year, IDEM awarded more than six point two million dollars in recycling and household waste grants. These grants helped fund collection programs, program expansion and equipment to collect or process recyclables. One of the best parts of my job is delivering those great big giant checks to districts and municipalities when they are awarded such grant money. IDEM has also been involved in providing funds for education programs and school environmental curriculum development.

In fact, our grant programs have grown significantly. Our household hazardous waste grants grew from \$134,000 in 1998 to \$334,000 this year. Our traditional grants for recycling almost doubled from one point two million dollars last year to two point one million dollars this year. Our jumpstart grants, those that fund basic education and promotional programs, grew from \$576,000 to \$759,000. At IDEM we like to be able to put our money where our mouth is. Our grant program continues to be strong, and we ask that you be patient with us while we work out a few bugs in the system.

In another important area we have also seen important growth. The agency's 5-Star Environmental Recognition Programs have grown since last year. In addition to the drycleaners recognition program, we initiated two new programs; Vehicle Maintenance Shops and Child Care Centers. So far, we have recognized sixteen vehicle maintenance shops and forty-eight child care facilities. We are getting ready to announce many additional vehicle maintenance shops - mostly Indiana Military Department, and we will also be announcing additional child care facilities soon.

Last year our Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance established an important data base for you and all Hoosiers. For the first time someone in Indiana can go to the World Wide Web and get information that tells them what chemicals are being released to the environment across the street, across the county, or across the state. A searchable database puts knowledge at the fingertips of those who most need the information - and we all know that knowledge is power.

How have we accomplished all of this? What resources have we used? Let me answer that by sharing some information that will soon be released in our 1999 annual report.

The agency's budget for the 1997-99 biennium was almost one hundred ninety-eight point eight million dollars. Just over forty percent of that budget comes from dedicated funds...those funds that come primarily from fees, fines and cost recovery monies. How that money can be spent is determined by the legislature and unused funds remain in the dedicated fund.

The other nearly sixty percent of our funds are split between federal dollars and state revenues. About thirty percent from state funds and about twenty-eight percent from federal dollars.

We receive federal funds through grants from the EPA and other federal programs which usually require a matching amount from the state. State dollars come from general revenues; unused portions at the end of the budget cycle go back to the general fund.

Finally, in this look back over our shoulders let me highlight two particular programs that should be of interest to those of you here. We are proud to be a part of Governor O'Bannon's Building Bright Beginnings effort. No mission can be more important for us than helping protect our state's children. By so doing we safeguard the state's future.

I mentioned a moment ago our efforts to help fund education programs throughout Indiana. I also mentioned the forty-eight newly recognized child care facilities that have voluntarily chosen to participate and have taken those extra steps to do more than is required.

Another important project is our lead awareness program. In association with the state health department, IDEM trained more than one hundred lead assessors who have performed lead assessment at homes and child care facilities throughout all of Indiana. We have also been able to provide \$106,000 to at risk counties and communities for additional education and outreach.

One of our more important programs is the mercury awareness program. You all know the dangers of mercury. Serious damage to sight, hearing and motor skills are mercury's threat to children. IDEM, the state health department and DNR have worked together for years to provide Hoosier anglers information about the dangers of mercury in our fish. Our efforts have been recognized nationally, especially those efforts targeted at pregnant women and children.

In October last year we did even more. In association with the Regional Household Hazardous Waste Task Force, we created the Mercury Awareness Program. Through June of this year we committed more than \$200,000 and funded and hired a full-time coordinator. During that time the program held mercury collection programs in all ninety-two counties, collected more than 2,000 pounds of mercury, and developed on-going programs and outreach in eighty-two counties. It is a great beginning...and thanks to all of you here who are a part of the effort.

But that's enough about the past. It is, we believe, a record for which we can be proud. We did have some shining successes as well as some disappointing shortcomings. But we have a record on which we can build...Shakespeare's past as prologue.

So let's look at the future. Albert Einstein once said: "I never think of the future, it will come soon enough." A useful sentiment...except for those of us who must sit down and plan. Where are we going and what do we want to accomplish. Then there is Tennyson's perspective: "For I dipt into the future, for as far as the eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the World and all the wonder that would be."

Surely a noble and lyrical thought. But also as unhelpful to us as was Einstein's thoughts. We do not have that ability to see where we will be a year from now. I don't have a crystal ball and the Magic 8 Ball in our office is getting worn out and does not work very well anymore.

But one thing I can do here today is share with you where we hope to go and what we want to do. I would like to share with you our plans as they are outlined in the agency's priorities for the next two years. Shortly after my arrival at IDEM we began the process of crafting these priorities, and I quickly felt like Pogo when he commented on "Insurmountable Opportunities": there are so many things we could be, and should be, doing as the state's environmental agency.

So, to craft these priorities we not only reached deep within the agency, by asking all staff for their input - from mail room clerks to deputies, but we also went outside the agency. We spoke to various groups and representatives of various groups. We spoke to local elected officials and legislators. We spoke to industry and we spoke to concerned citizen groups. And we spoke to people in this room. For those of us who gave us feedback - Thank you. Now, let me work through the priorities and point out how you can continue, or begin, as the case may be, to be a part of the execution of these priorities.

The four agency priorities are as follows. They are Building a Better IDEM, Communicating Environmental Information, Reducing Exposure to Toxics, and Partnering for Liveable Environments.

By building a better IDEM we plan to work better and smarter as an agency. We plan to improve our work environment, in part, by doing more to make you, and other Hoosiers, more aware of what we are doing. We also plan to Walk the Walk as well as Talk the Talk. IDEM will be, and in fact already is, a leader in Governor O'Bannon's "Greening the Government" initiative, which you will be learning more about during the conference. IDEM co-chairs the multi-agency task force that is examining ways in which state agencies can reduce, reuse and recycle the many materials we use. At IDEM, we will begin buying and using more recycled materials on a regular basis. We are already working hard at source reduction for paper...and believe me...reducing the amount of paper in a bureaucracy as large as ours is no easy feat...but we will do it.

One of our recent steps at paper reduction is double-sided copying and printing whenever possible; including official correspondence, which has taken some getting used to - I had to assure staff that, yes, I would sign letters that were double sided. This cuts down not only on the amount of paper we use, it cuts down on the amount of paper discarded, and perhaps most importantly, it cuts down on file cabinet needs. We also plan to enhance and improve our use of our regional offices in Northwest, Southwest, and Northern Indiana, so that we can reduce the need to travel to and from Indianapolis - for both staff and customers.

Likewise, we will be evaluating sources of lead and mercury throughout our agency and reducing the usage as much as possible. We are also looking at P2 integration throughout the agency in everything we do.

We believe that these efforts at building a better IDEM will make us better at doing our job each day and, thereby, help make Indiana a cleaner healthier place to live...the ultimate goal.

By communicating environmental information, we plan to make information more accessible within our agency and to those of you on the outside. Sometimes someone in the agency will have developed great information and put it in a very usable form. However, someone two floors away might not know about it even though it could be very useful. And usually, if someone two floors away doesn't know about it, someone at the other end of the state is at an even greater disadvantage.

We plan to attack these weaknesses and make environmental information more accessible. We will work to integrate various databases and make them known and easy to get to.

We are beginning an effort to improve and consolidate our file rooms and the information they contain. The first step will be to locate the files for the Offices of Land Quality and Water Management in the same place on the twelfth floor of the Government Center. Next, we plan to move the files for the Office of Air Management to the same location. We will also work to put as much information as we can in regional file rooms.

Under this priority we will also be focusing on Environmental Education programs. We recognize that we need better internal coordination, as well as coordination with educational programs with other state, local and private agencies. We also need to do a better job of promoting the educational programs and materials within IDEM. This is an area where I see we can make much progress in reaching a greater number of individuals by joining the forces of the Solid Waste Districts and IDEM.

Another of our agency priorities is to reduce exposure to toxics. In many ways this might be our most important goal. Let me highlight some of the specific projects we are beginning to identify in this area.

We will develop an integrated pest management pilot program. We will work with child care facilities and schools to introduce them to integrated pest management practices. We will work with the state chemist to hold workshops throughout the state.

We will expand our child care center efforts. We will work to increase the number of facilities that participate in the 5-Star program. We will also develop an expanded outreach program for all childcare facilities and work to help educate parents about environmental safety for their children.

We will also begin a program to deal with the problem of asthma in children. We will determine those areas in the state where asthma rates are abnormally high. We will then work with government and private agencies to develop strategies for schools to use in the targeted areas.

We will also begin programs to target styrene and methylene chloride. We will expand our lead and mercury programs, and we will work to expand the Governor's Toxic Reduction Challenge.

These are just a few of the new or expanded efforts we will be making to reduce Hoosier exposure to toxics and look forward to partnering with local Solid Waste Districts in just about every aspect.

The fourth goal is for IDEM to partner with local communities to promote liveable environments. Our community relations office will be working hard to improve accessibility and to empower local communities in environmental matters.

We will be establishing an Interagency Liveable Environments Network which will be a network of facilitators that can help to direct communities to appropriate resources, such as technical experts, and entities that can provide financial assistance. We will also work with this group to develop a toolkit to be used by locally developed groups of environmental leaders.

As an outgrowth of the network, we hope to identify two pilot communities to assist with community environmental planning. We are very excited about this program and look forward to working closely with folks at the local level to create a template that can be shared with other communities.

We will also rely heavily on the model established in IDEM's Wildcat Creek pilot watershed program, which has been very successful. The level of local participation has been wonderful and is to be emulated.

We will be encouraging other communities to follow the lead of Wildcat Creek in watershed planning and water quality issues. And, frankly, local involvement has been the key to success to Wildcat Creek, and is an essential component to future efforts at community planning. Again, this is another place where each of you, at the local level can help to make a difference. We at IDEM can not do this. These are community issues that need community participation.

These are the four priorities we have set for ourselves as an agency. I have only highlighted a few of the specifics of the initiatives for you today. We plan to do a lot. We want your help. Watch what we do and give us your feedback. Join a workgroup. Continue to work with us and be a partner in every sense of the word. Be sure to let us know if we're doing something really well and don't hesitate to let us know where we can improve.

Finally, today, let me take a couple of minutes to tell you of some of the things we plan to do at OPPTA. I have already mentioned areas where we plan to expand the 5-Star program. We hope to expand the solid waste management fund grant program to reach 75 grantees each year and expand the monies awarded to well over a million dollars by 2001. We hope to expand the household hazardous waste program as well by 2001.

We will continue and expand our efforts to teach more students and teachers about reduction, reuse and recycling...the new three R's. We'll reach out to more communities to help start new recycling programs and help the ones we have to grow even more.

This has been just a quick peek at IDEM's future. Like I said...I don't have a crystal ball to know what will happen. But I do know what we want to happen. We want to continue to do more...become more effective...accomplish more...reach out to make more friends and partners. We have learned at IDEM we can't do much by ourselves. We need you and lots of other groups and individuals. Together we can make a difference.

So...just like the Roman god Janus...we have today been looking backward and forward. We have a solid past on which to build. We have a promising future to meet with enthusiasm and excitement. I cannot promise we will achieve all of our goals...fulfill all of our dreams. What I can promise you today is that we will try...we will work very hard to accomplish these tasks and truly make a difference. I plan to work hard so that next year when we face a new future we can then look back and say we did experience what Tennyson called "all the wonder that would be."